

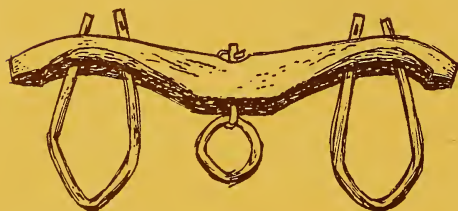
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Abraham Lincoln - as to his
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Abraham Lincoln

As to His Kindness and Mercy --

Let Woman Testify

By

EMANUEL HERTZ

Delivered before the

Women's National Republican Club

February 11, 1929

Dedicated

to

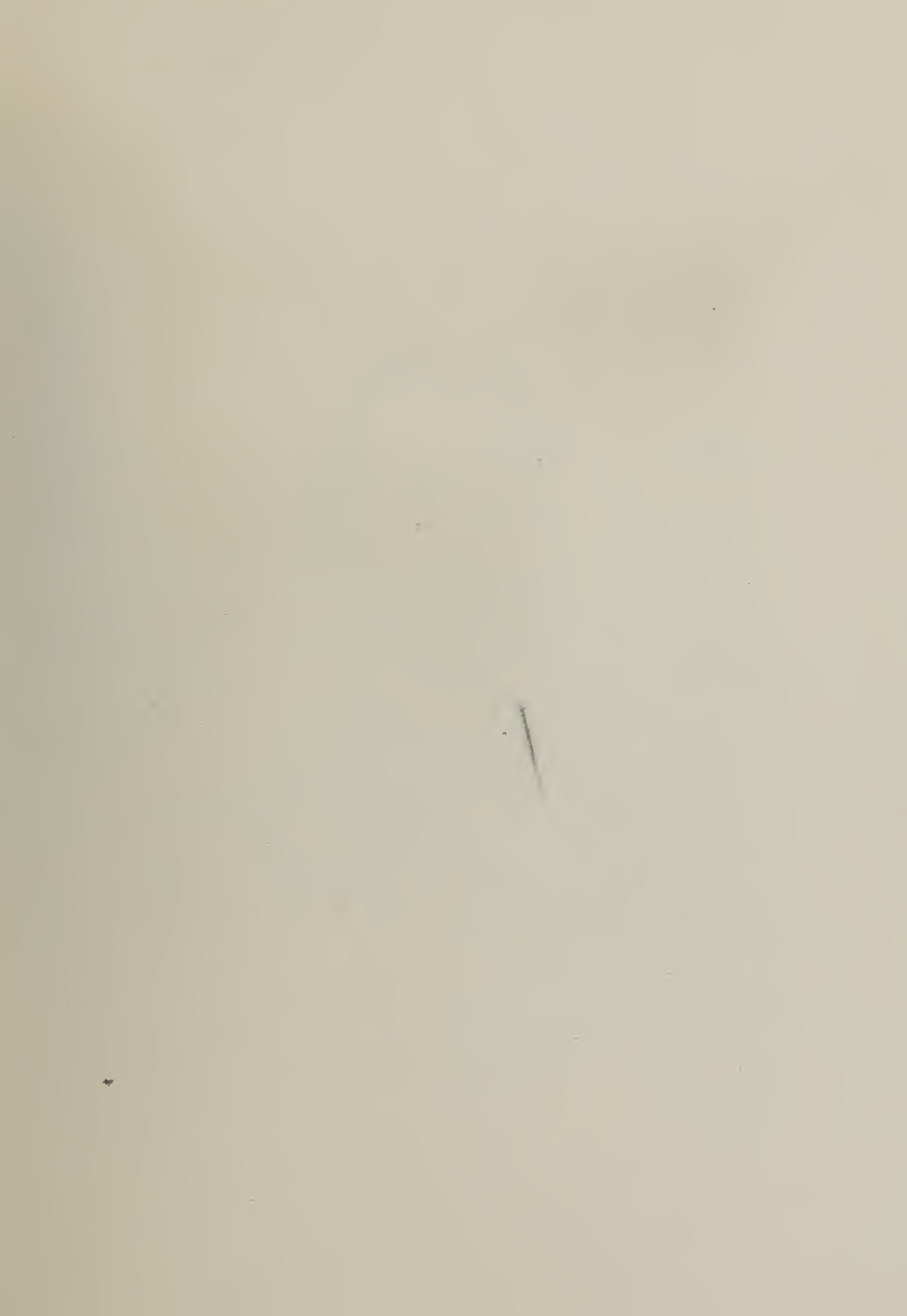
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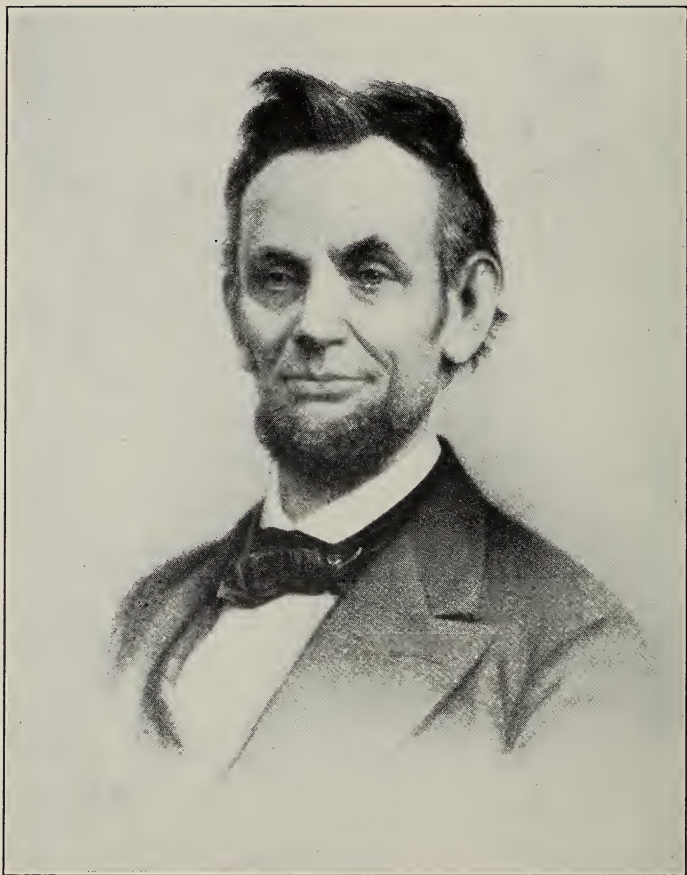
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THE AUTHOR





ABRAHAM LINCOLN

ABRAHAM LINCOLN — AS TO HIS KINDNESS AND MERCY — LET WOMAN TESTIFY

A PREACHMENT

By
EMANUEL HERTZ

(Delivered before the Women's National Republican Club, Feb. 11, 1929.)

25054 HENRY

THERE was a broad humanity about Abraham Lincoln, which was particularly evident when he came in contact with the mother, with the widow, or with the children. Of children, he was passionately fond—and they of him. Those little images of freedom attracted him—with a neighbor's baby sleeping inside his cape or upon his shoulder to give him calm and poise while thinking of his coming speech or argument, his own children romping and wandering about unrestrained by Cabinet meeting, by Foreign Minister, by General or by Senator. The children seemed indispensable to this child of the prairies.

His own boys, with their little girl playmate brought to the White House to keep them company, had just tried and convicted the doll of treason. The doll was to be executed and buried in the plot of roses. Their little girl friend, sent by Mrs. Lincoln to quiet the boys, suggests that they appeal to the President for a pardon; the boys do apply for the pardon, and the father-President reaches for one of the pardon blanks—which he used so often in spite of protests from the Secretary of War and his Generals—and fills out a pardon for the doll. The great man had time for everything! He counted that day lost, as he once said in retrospect, when he could not plant a rose where a thorn had grown, or to quote his own phrase: "I want it said of me that I always plucked a thistle and planted a flower when I thought a flower would grow."

He was happy when he could pardon some young boy condemned to death, and relieve the tension of a mother's agony—intent to the point of despair on saving her boy. He was ever considerate and kind to the wife who aided and advised and managed somehow—during the storm and stress period of his life. One heard him say: "I reckon there's a little short woman down at our house that would like to hear the news." Another heard him say: "There is a lady over yonder on Eighth Street who is deeply interested in this news; I will carry it to her," immediately after the telegram announcing his nomination was handed to him—the first real achievement of his life up to that moment. And on the night of the election Lincoln walked to the Eighth Street cottage and told the woman who knew it all the time—"Mary—we're elected." The beautiful thought about his angel mother, which he often uttered, his loyalty to his stepmother to the very end—was ever the Fifth Commandment more lovingly observed—are but other evidences of the nobility of his heart and the exaltation of his soul.

His letters dealing with his serio-comic matrimonial attempts are full of genuine humor and heartrending pathos when they refer to Ann Rutledge or Mary Owens alternately. His inexplicable conduct toward the clever and accomplished Mary Todd—who ever had an abiding faith in his ultimate success and his elevation to power, and whom he ultimately married, after she had rejected the brilliant and marvelously successful Douglas—is but another instance of Lincoln's moods in his contact with women.

He was ever ready with a noble sentiment, with fatherly advice to the aspiring young girl with whom he came in contact, and he ever sought their company. He could never refuse to write some lofty sentiment into the notebooks which were the fashion of the times. During his stay in Winchester, Lincoln stopped at the town hotel—the Haggard House. In the proprietor's family were two daughters. At their request, Lincoln wrote the following verses in their autograph book, composed as it occurred to him on the spur of the moment:

"To Rosa—

You are young, and I am older;
You are hopeful, I am not—

Enjoy life, ere it grow colder—
Pluck the roses ere they rot.

Teach your beau to heed the lay—
That sunshine soon is lost in shade—
That now's as good as any day—
To take thee, ere she fade.

Winchester, Sept. 28, 1858 A. LINCOLN."

"To Linnie —

A sweet plaintive song did I hear,
And I fancied that she was the singer—
May emotions as pure as that song set a-stir
Be the worst that the future shall bring her.

Winchester, Sept. 30, 1858. A. LINCOLN."

And how typical is Lincoln's observation about Speed's happiness, with whom he conducted a rather lengthy correspondence about Speed's impending marriage—urging him to marry—and after that happy event Lincoln wrote some fine letters demonstrating to Speed that he was infinitely better off now that he was married than he had been before he took that fatal step. How positive Lincoln is that Speed is "much happier" or rather "less miserable" than he had been, can be seen from the following statement: "My old father," says Lincoln, "used to have a saying that 'if you make a bad bargain, hug it all the tighter.' Even if in marrying Fanny he (Speed) made a bad bargain, which is unthinkable, how pleasant in her case to apply that maxim."

Among Lincoln's old acquaintances now living in Leavenworth was one whose family included a daughter just approaching young womanhood. In her autograph album Lincoln wrote the following inscription:

"With pleasure I write my name in your Album. Ere long some younger man will be more happy to confer his name upon you. Don't allow it, Mary, until fully assured that he is worthy of the happiness.

Your friend,
A. LINCOLN."

And what a refutation to the charge that he was absent-minded and careless about his wife's well-being. Here is an extract from a letter which has just lately been found:

"Are you entirely free from headache? That is good—considering it is the first spring you have been free from it since we were acquainted—I am afraid you will get so well and fat and young as to be wanting to marry again. Tell Louisa I want her to watch you a little for me. Get weighed and write me how much you weigh."

So careful and thoughtful was he about the comfort of his wife that he has not even forgotten to assume the burden of struggling with that domestic problem of the ages—the servant problem—which was a perpetual nightmare to Mrs.

Lincoln:

"By the way, you do not intend to do without a girl because the one you had left you? Get another as soon as you can to take charge of the dear codgers."

Here is a letter to Herndon, hitherto unpublished, in a lighter vein, in which he shows that he was not at all blind to the charms of the fair sex even long after he was married, and in Washington—a member of Congress:

"Dear William:

Yours of the 3rd is this moment received; and I hardly need say it gives unalloyed pleasure—I now almost regret writing the serious, long faced letter, I wrote yesterday; but let the past as nothing be—Go it while you're young!
* * * I write this in the confusion of the H. R. and with several other things to attend to—I will send you about eight different speeches this evening; and as to kissing a pretty girl, I know one very pretty one, but I guess she won't let me kiss her.

Yours forever,

A. LINCOLN."

What a fine specimen of the sentimental Lincoln this letter to Herndon is, about the beautiful girl he knows in Washington. And what a refutation of the claims of those who would have us believe that Lincoln was but the living subject caricatured in the grotesque and harrowing pictures and steel engravings of the time—which portray him as a perennial man of woe and of trouble and of tears—with almost inconceivably homely, if not repulsive, features. That was before Marshall and Carpenter and Timothy Cole and St. Gaudens—and above all—Brady's photographs. And last, but not least, Healy made that particular method of portraying Lincoln ridiculous by giving us the real, living Lincoln.

Of the many cases in which women were his clients two are typical of all the others and go a long way to justify all that has been said about his unselfish services for women when they were his clients. The Wright case is probably quoted more often than any other. Wright had charged the widow of a Revolutionary soldier half her compensation of \$400 for getting her claim allowed. The old woman, crippled and bent with age, went to Lincoln and Herndon with her claim against Wright. Lincoln demanded the return of the money which was refused, and Lincoln and Herndon sued him to compel a refund.

Lincoln made careful preparation for his appeal to the jury: "No contract. Not professional services. Unreasonable charge. Money retained by Def't not given by Pl'ff. Revolutionary War. Describe Valley Forge privations. Ice—Soldier's bleeding feet. Pl'ffs husband. Soldier leaving home for army. **Skin Def't.** Close"—so run Lincoln's notes for his speech. His partner reproduces his peroration—the parting at the cabin home when the young soldier left for the army, the fond farewell to the lonely wife, the kissing of the baby in its cradle and other touching incidents of the patriot's departure. "Time rolls by; the heroes of '76 have passed away and are encamped on the other shore. The soldier has gone to rest, and now, crippled, blinded, and broken, his widow comes to you and to me, gentlemen of the jury, to right her wrongs. She was not always thus. She was once a beautiful young woman. Her step was as elastic, her face as fair, her voice as sweet as any that rang in the mountains of old Virginia. But now she is poor and defenceless. Out

here on the prairies of Illinois, many hundreds of miles away from the scenes of her childhood, she appeals to us, who enjoy the privileges achieved for us by the patriots of the Revolution, for our sympathetic aid and manly protection. All I ask is, shall we befriend her?"

Of course the jury, half of whom were 'in tears,' would befriend her, and they promptly returned a verdict against Wright who cowered in his chair 'writhing' under Lincoln's terrible invective. Lincoln paid his client's hotel bill and her fare home, and, when the judgment was collected, sent the aged woman all of it and charged her nothing for his services.

Another engaging example of services rendered by Lincoln without pay is his refusal to charge anything for saving the farm of a young woman, Rebecca Daimwood, who inherited the land from an uncle, Christopher Robinson, the administrator of whose estate was John Lane. It would appear that the girl had made her home with Lane who had occupied the farm. Miss Daimwood married a young farmer, William M. Dorman, and claimed the land. Thereupon Lane petitioned the Court for the sale of the property to satisfy his claim of a little more than a thousand dollars against Robinson's estate, which claim had been allowed him by the Court some fifteen years earlier.

The young married couple resisted Lane's petition, but were beaten in the trial court. Their attorney, Samuel D. Marshall, took an appeal to the Supreme Court and retained Lincoln to conduct the case in that tribunal. Lane was represented by Lyman Trumbull. Argument on both sides was thorough and Lincoln supported his points by the citation of many authorities. The Court in a long opinion sustained Lincoln's principal contentions and reversed the decree of the trial court. It is interesting to find that that opinion was delivered by Justice James Shields, Lincoln's duelling antagonist of a year or two before he argued this case. When asked for the amount of his fee, Lincoln said that his services were his wedding present to Rebecca and William.

What a splendid collection of letters written to mothers and widows we have—almost anyone can see who glances through those made available by the compilers. He was

almost uncanny in picking from vast piles of letters that of a little girl who asked him whether he had a little daughter, to which he replied deploring the fact that he **had no** little daughter. And this to the little girl who advised him to grow a beard to improve his looks, and whom he called for on his way to Washington—an act much condemned by the hostile press of the time—the child appeared, and in the presence of the multitude he kissed the child and told the story of the letter.

But what a vast number there must still be outstanding and hidden, in just such notebooks and family chests. If only a spirit of fairness would animate those who still hoard these Lincoln letters—and if they would but deposit a copy with the Library of Congress and enable us to see all and read all that Lincoln wrote! But the vicious spirit of the speculator in these drops of blood from Lincoln's heart seems to have acted like poison on all who have Lincoln material. They seem to believe that what they have is priceless—but that to publish would cheapen the document. Hence, either at auction or private sale only the very wealthy have a chance to acquire such treasures—and they, as a rule, proceed to lock them up to protect them against fire, and particularly against the public. No one can compete with them, as they are commissioned by people who cannot even spend their huge incomes, and their orders are to get these Lincoln treasures at any price, no matter how fabulous.

The Lincoln student who is anxious to disclose all about that great career must wait—until these owners make favorable testamentary disposition of these treasures and release these captive sentinels who would tell us so much which is new about Lincoln. As a rule, they forget the material—which is either again sold into solitude and captivity, or locked up for another long period of years. "Would that some power the giftie gie us," to persuade these folks to make an exception with Lincoln's papers and release them, and make his life story complete for those of today.

Some of these gems turn up from time to time and charming personalities like the late Senator Beveridge seem to be able to procure some of them, at least. But the Beveridges are few, and even they are frequently rebuffed. Hence, the

task of unravelling Lincoln's many-sided, multi-colored personality remains a task for the ages—very unfair, indeed, to this man of the ages.

But to return to the subject of which I spoke and from which I am constantly taken away—like old man Cato with his perpetual repetition of the phrase which had to do with the doom of Carthage—to return to these Lincoln letters and stories which picture Lincoln's loves, and Lincoln's letter to the Ellsworths, one of the noblest documents of this rare spirit, and to the Bixby mother, a missive quoted more frequently than almost anything else Lincoln ever wrote, and the other long series of letters showing his tenderness, his ardent hopes for the success and well-being of the particular family to which his attention is directed—his great regard and consideration for woman can be seen in almost every act and deed which had to do with the women who came into his life—either by way of his law office, where he championed the cause of the widow—or by way of the Executive Mansion whither the distracted mothers ever found their way after they had been rebuffed at the War Office or at the Army Headquarters—these women always found a friend in Lincoln, a friend to whom they could make their final appeal and be helped.

One need but see him enter the home of an old friend, a rebel, a Confederate General, George Pickett, whom he knew as a boy in Quincy, Illinois, when he entered Richmond at the conclusion of the War. But let General Pickett's widow tell the story:

“The name of Abraham Lincoln, wherever it may occur, recalls a scene from my window in the old Pickett home at the corner of Sixth and Lehigh Streets in Richmond on a day in early April after the surrender of our armies. A carriage passing by my home was surrounded by guards and followed by a retinue of soldiers. After it had passed, the cavalcade paused and a man alighted from the carriage and came back to our house. Hearing his knock I opened the door with my baby in my arms and saw a tall, gaunt, and sad-faced man who asked:

“‘Is this George Pickett's place?’

“‘Yes, sir, but he is not here.’

"I know that, ma'am, but I just wanted to see the place. Down in old Quincy, Ill., I have heard the lad describe the home. I am Abraham Lincoln.'

"The President,' I gasped.

"The stranger shook his head.

"No, ma'am; just Abraham Lincoln, George Pickett's old boyhood friend.'

"I am George Pickett's wife and this is his boy.'

I had never seen Mr. Lincoln but remembered the intense love and reverence with which my soldier always spoke of him.

"It had been long since my baby had seen a man and being reminded of his own father, reached out his hands to Mr. Lincoln, who took him in his arms, an expression of almost divine love glorifying his face. My baby opened his mouth wide and gave his father's friend a dewy baby kiss. Putting the little one back in my arms Mr. Lincoln said:

"Tell your father, the rascal, that I forgive him for the sake of that kiss and those bright eyes.'"

I saw about half a hundred of the girls recently who met Lincoln at Galesburg in 1858, and who returned seventy years later to do honor to his memory at the Seventieth Anniversary of the joint debate at Galesburg, Illinois—girls who believed in him and who sensed his greatness and his nobility of soul. Throughout a long lifetime they had reflected upon what they heard him say then on that momentous occasion when he began his climb to immortality—not one of them but a prouder, happier and better woman because of the momentary contact, while he was on that stage upon which were riveted the anxious eyes of an entire country. Even the fine Southern ladies to whom his name for a time was anathema, came to realize that he was, indeed, an indulgent and a kindly administrator—and all too soon, alas, they began to see, to their sorrow, that when the fatal shot removed him from the place of authority, every one of them—the whole South—had lost their best friend. For he knew no rebels, no Confederates. "We are not enemies, but friends," was the leit motif which

rang through all his acts and deeds and words and pleas for a better understanding between the sections. How many a woman, after she came to recognize his noble heart, after she had become enlightened as to his true character, exclaimed, as did the mother who had obtained the pardon for her son, condemned by a court-martial, through personal intercession with the President. Her explanation justified giving the pardon. On leaving the room she broke out: "I knew it was a Copperhead lie! Why they told me that Mr. Lincoln was an ugly man, and it is a lie. He is the handsomest man I ever saw in my life." The glow of goodness had transfigured him. How criminal, how outrageous, that this man has been so much maligned, misrepresented and misunderstood.

When we plod through the diaries of the period—the records kept by the women of the time—we find that they had the better understanding of his remarkable character. Long before his contemporaries were willing to admit his greatness the women of an entire country were willing to trust him their all—their husbands, their brothers and their sons—the women had faith in Father Abraham. Those noble women were almost unanimous in their faith in Lincoln. Harriet Beecher Stowe, the frail school teacher and mother, who had started a world revolution against slavery—writing her book with a pen dipped in her heart's blood—even while she brought up her large family and was an indispensable helpmate to her husband; Julia Ward Howe, whose winged words put to music and song moved entire hosts to battle and to victory—were at the head of an army at home which kept the faith and the courage and the endurance of their warriors at the front on the firing line, during the entire seemingly interminable stretch of the agonizing war. While a great many leaders among the men were talking of compromise with the slaveholders—and were thus indirectly lending aid and comfort to the enemy, these women, like the women of Israel of old who declined to contribute their jewels or have any share in the casting of the golden calf, and declined to worship at that idolatrous shrine of gold imposed upon them by the men, while Moses was in the Mountain—these modern women of light and leading declined to bend the knee to the Moloch of the 19th Century—who was in the last throes of expiring agony. During all this time a great many so-called leaders advised peace

at any price and seriously and insistently counselled the President to "let the erring sisters go in peace."

Lincoln had won the hearts of the women of America—and therefore could not fail. They had taken his true measure—these mothers and daughters of America, these women of New England who had trekked through the Virginias, Kentucky, Ohio and Indiana, who had opened and had a part in the winning of the great West and Northwest. They had set their faces like flint against the octopus of slavery which they, with their superior instincts, saw could but end in the entire disintegration of our government and its free institutions.

And so, in turn, whenever and wherever the great Emancipator came in contact with the gentler sex, he would comply with almost any humane request—and before such a request the military laws, the iron rule of war, would melt away as Lincoln's great heart ever responded when he could wipe away a tear or gladden the heart of a broken-hearted mother, or hearken to the prayer of an appealing wife, for the life of a husband awaiting execution.

This man—who could be stern and inexorable when the occasion required, this man—who would never falter when a great principle was at stake, this man—who was haunted by the tens of thousands of wounded and dead, all offered up that the Union might live, this stern protagonist of a bloody war would ever stoop from his great height and console and help and ease the tribulations of the unhappy woman who was sinking under her burden of despair. Oh! that justice could at last be done in some definite manner, by analyzing how many acts of mercy of the great pardoning President were brought about by some good woman, whose bleeding heart poured out a story which Lincoln heard and heeded. He always found a way. He was, indeed, the great defending angel of the victims of the inexorable military rule. Yes, this frontiersman, this rail-splitter, this farm hand, had the heart of a woman, of an angel of mercy. To all of this let woman testify!

"I have never studied the art of paying compliments to women," said Lincoln, "but I must say that if all that has been said by orators and poets since the creation of the world

—in praise of women—were applied to the women of America, it would not do them justice for their conduct during this war. God bless the women of America!”

These women looked into Lincoln’s eyes, into those eyes into which but few men have looked—these men who came in contact with him had what seemed to them stern and serious business—at least so they thought—and they were impatient with this patient man—with this man of sad eyes. These men never saw the light which shone in Lincoln’s eyes. But the mother looked into those eyes and found sympathy and saw hope. Those marvelous eyes which told of suffering, of disappointment, of misery, of poverty, of hope deferred, of ambitions unrealized. “They were the eyes,” says Franklin Lane, “of one who saw with sympathy and interpreted with common sense. * * * They were the eyes of a truly humble spirit whose ambition was not a love for power but a desire to be supremely useful. They were the eyes of compassion and mercy and a deep understanding. * * * They were patient eyes, eyes that could wait and wait and live on in the faith that right would win. They were eyes which challenged the nobler things in man and brought out the hidden largeness. They were humorous eyes, that saw things in their true proportions and in their real relationships. They looked through cant and pretense and the great and little vanities of great and little men. They were the eyes of an unflinching courage and an unfaltering faith rising out of a sincere dependence upon the Maker of the Universe.”

The women, the mothers, the widows, the wives, the sisters—they did see the light that shone in Lincoln’s eyes—and that is why they prevailed, why he hearkened to their pleas for mercy, for help, for aid, for guidance. Who could resist such eyes? What power less exalted could cope with such eyes? Whether Armstrong or Cartwright, Forquer or Douglas, McClellan or Hooker, Davis or Wade, Seward or Chase—they could not carry on, they could not stand up against these eyes of the man who was earnest, determined and right—through those eyes there shone the rays of God’s eternal justice, through those eyes were seen the destiny of his fellow-men who were pre-ordained to be free and remain free, and have the courage to free the slave in order that they themselves be truly free. The light that shone in Lincoln’s eyes

lighted the way, pointed the direction to the eternal things which this nation, under God, has done and will do in days to come. Lincoln's eyes were the mirror of Lincoln's heart—which bled to make men free. And in the light of those eyes his fellowmen saw light and leading and final victory over themselves, as well as over their misguided brothers—"We are not enemies but friends," is the constant echo from those lips—enforced with the celestial light which shone from Lincoln's eyes.

Washington, July 11. 1848

Dear William:

Yours of the 3rd is, this moment
received, and I have, now say, it gives me deeper
pleasure - I now almost regret writing the answer,
long since written, I write yesterday! but let the heart
as nothing be. So it while you're young!
I write this in the confidence of the H. P. and
with some other things to attach to - I will send
you about eight different specimens this evening;
and as to kissing a pretty girl, a known one very
pretty one, but I guess she won't let me kiss her.

Yours forever
Alfred

Let the President be
pleased on taking the
oath of Dec. 9. 1863.

A. Lincoln
April 14. 1865.

Courtesy of Gabriel Wells and Emanuel Hertz







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